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E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: OPRC KMDR TU PREL KPAO  
SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT  
FRIDAY, JANUARY 30, 2009

In Today's Papers

Q Erdogan - 'The Conqueror of Davos' or Just 'a Train Wreck?'  
Q Erdogan Calls on Obama to Re-evaluate Definition of "Terror"  
Q Constitutional Court Annuls PM's Authority to Tap Phones  
Q Al-Qaeda Clash with Police at a Post Office in Istanbul  
Q Erdogan: Not the End of the World if No IMF Deal Reached

Erdogan - Greeted By Cheering Crowds as 'The Conqueror of Davos' (Vatan) but is he 'Just a Train Wreck?' (Milliyet) THE story of the day is that of Prime Minister Erdogan's antics yesterday during a panel on Gaza at the World Economic Forum in Davos. Many Islamist, conservative, nationalist papers applaud Erdogan for standing up to the Israeli president. Conservative-nationalist Turkiye reports in, "An Historic Lesson for Peres" that "Peres boldly defended Israel's operations in Gaza" and Erdogan responded by saying "You know very well how to kill." Islamist-oriented Yeni Safak calls Erdogan's harsh criticism against Peres, "An Historic Gaza Slap," and the paper calls Erdogan, "The Heroic Knight" who "sharply criticized the killing of civilians in Gaza" and "shouted at Peres 'you are guilty!'" Yeni Safak also reports, "Erdogan exposed Israel's guilt." Islamist-oriented Zaman reports, "Peres Apologized to Erdogan" for the tensions on the panel and the paper calls Peres' remarks during the panel "biased." Zaman also notes Prime Minister Erdogan said later, "Peres must learn how to properly speak to the Turkish Prime Minister." Extreme right Tercuman reports, "Erdogan Deserves Applause," for his reaction to Peres. Conservative-nationalist Bugun headlines, "Erdogan Deals a Blow to The Arrogant Israeli President Peres." Mainstream Vatan reports crowds greeted Erdogan upon his 3:00 am return to the Istanbul airport by cheering "Damn Israel" and "Erdogan - the Conqueror of Davos!" Mainstream Aksam reports the crowds hailed Erdogan as "the new leader of the world."

Meanwhile, many mainstream and liberal outlets are more skeptical of the impact Erdogan's outburst will have on Turkey's global reputation. In a reference to Kasimpasa slum in Istanbul, liberal Radikal headlines, "A Climate Like Kasimpasa in Davos," and criticizes Erdogan's "street-boy behavior" in front of an elite

audience in Davos as he "foamed at the mouth," and "clashed with Peres" and vowed "to never return to Davos." Radikal columnist Murat Yetkin asks, "Will Erdogan's antics damage relations between the U.S. and Turkey?" Mainstream Milliyet carries the banner headline, "Shock in Davos" and reports the reactions of several retired Turkish diplomats who say, "the incident will fuel tensions between Israel and Turkey" and "Erdogan has damaged Turkey's status as an impartial mediator in the Middle East." Milliyet also reports an opposition leader said, "this spat constitutes the end of Erdogan's standing in the civilized world" while the paper also quotes a former foreign minister who called the incident "a train wreck." Columnist Rusen Cakir of mainstream Vatan comments, "The tensions created by Erdogan in Davos may harm the AKP's legitimacy on the international stage," but "his popularity in the Muslim world will rise," and "this will raise further concerns that Turkey is estranging itself from the West." Finally, mainstream Hurriyet declares on its front page, "The Spirit of Davos is Dead."

In a developing story, NTV is reporting that Hamas has announced, "We respectfully welcome Erdogan's courageous response" to Peres.

Today's liberal Radikal headlines, "A Kasimpasa (Slum) Climate in Davos" as Erdogan "foams at the mouth."

Today's extreme right Turkiye headlines, "An Historic Lesson from Erdogan to Peres."

Editorial Opinion on Erdogan's Stance in Davos Oktay Eksi wrote in mainstream Hurriyet: "The entire world has watched our leader

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exercise no sign of anger management. This incident is a scandal and proves that Erdogan is no statesman."

Gungor Mengi wrote in mainstream Vatan: "PM Erdogan has an uncontrollable temper. His scandalous acts contradict the efforts of the President and the Foreign Minister to temper Turkey's rhetoric regarding Israel's operations in Gaza. Erdogan defends Hamas more vigorously than most Arabs."

Murat Yetkin wrote in liberal-intellectual Radikal: "This Erdogan-Peres crisis was foreshadowed prior to the panel debate in Davos yesterday. The PM began this crisis yesterday afternoon by calling on U.S. President Obama to redefine the terms 'terror' and 'terrorist organizations' in the Middle East. People did try to calm the PM down, but clearly their efforts were in vain. Now, Turkish diplomacy will have to start from scratch."

Erdogan Calls on Obama to Re-evaluate Definitions of "Terror" and "Terrorist."

Prior to Erdogan's blowup in Davos yesterday, television outlets reported the PM recorded a video message posted on <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=szRc0eZ06hA> that asks the new Obama administration to "redefine 'terror' and 'terrorist organizations,' " and Erdogan said, "America must create a new policy in the Middle East based on these new definitions." Islamist-oriented Zaman comments that this message "refers to America's classification of Hamas and Hezbollah as terrorist organizations."

Constitutional Court Annuls Prime Minister's Authority to Tap Phones Today's papers report that the Constitutional Court ruled that the prime minister must coordinate with the president and the transportation minister to appoint a president to the Telecommunication board. In addition, the court annulled the prime minister's power to assign a commission to supervise wire tapping by the intelligence agency (MIT), police and gendarmerie. The ruling on the prime minister's authority came three years after former President Ahmet Necdet Sezer had asked for cancellation of the authority, notes mainstream Hurriyet.

Al-Qaeda Clash with Police at a Post Office in Istanbul Sabah, Cumhuriyet, Milliyet, Vatan, Zaman: Istanbul police followed six members of Al-Qaeda to a Post office in Sultanbeyli-Fatih yesterday.

Fighting broke out between the police and the terrorists when they attempted to rob the post office. During the clashes one terrorist was killed, three were injured and one was arrested. The last terrorist, who was waiting in a getaway van outside, managed to escape from the area.

Erdogan: Not the End of the World if No IMF Deal Reached Vatan, Hurriyet, Yeni Safak, Aksam, Hurriyet, Sabah: Following his meeting with deputy chair of the IMF Lipsky in Davos yesterday, PM Erdogan told the journalists, "There are two IMF demands that cannot be accepted by Turkey." He added that Turkey wants to make a deal with the IMF but "it is not the end of the world if there is no deal." Mainstream Vatan reports that despite Erdogan's comments, State Minister Mehmet Simsek said, "disagreements on the major issues have been resolved" and "the IMF delegation will be invited to Turkey within a few weeks."

TV News: CNN Turk

Domestic News

- A survey conducted by Middle East Technical University shows that free coal distributed by AKP-run Ankara Municipality has the highest content of arsenic and sulphur in the world.

- Istanbul Mayor Kadir Topbas decided not to use official vehicles

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till the elections on March 29.

- State Minister Mehmet Aydin refused to answer a question from a Roj TV correspondent during a press conference at the European Parliament.

International News

- Iran is ready to cooperate with Obama Administration if the US changes its policies and practices in the Middle East, Iran's FM Mottaki said.

- Ties between the KRG and Turkey are among the priorities of the Obama Administration. Speaking on the phone to Iraqi President Talabani, Secretary of State Hilary Clinton said they will work for the improvement of ties between northern Iraq and Turkey.

JEFFREY